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SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY TALKS TRANSFORMATION WITH TROOPS DEPLOYED WITH 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION

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KIRKUK AIR BASE, Iraq — Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston, stressed the importance of Army transformation when he traveled here to speak with Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division last week.

The 13th sergeant major of the Army, Preston served as V Corps and Combined Joint Task Force-7 command sergeant major before taking on his role as the Army's highest-ranking enlisted Soldier in December.

During his visit, Preston talked with Soldiers about the Army's future transition to Brigade Combat Team Units of Action; plans to keep Soldiers at duty stations for longer periods of time, and the issuing of new Army Combat Uniform.

In the base gym here, Preston addressed roughly 200 2nd BCT Soldiers about transformation and changes.



PHOTO COURTESY 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION
Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston discusses the Army's plans for transformation changes with Soldiers of the 25th Infantry Division deployed with V Corps' 1st Infantry Division in the gym at Kirkuk Air Base, Iraq Aug. 13.

"Transformation means predictability and stability for Soldiers and families," Preston said.

By the end of 2006, Preston said, the active Army will grow from 33 brigades to 43 BCT Units of Action with the option to build up to 48 BCT Units of Action in 2007.

"That's 15 brigades that we could potentially add to the Army inventory -- a 30 percent increase," Preston said.

The intent of the brigade transformation is to help units who are seeing multiple deployments.

"What we want to do is create more units out there to take the pressure off these units right now that are facing back-to-back deployments," Preston said. "So it's important that we transition the Army to create more deployable forces."

As part of the direction the Army wants to go in order to be more predictable and stable, PCS moves will slow down to facilitate these new BCT Units of Action and assist spouses to pursue their own careers, Preston said.

"By keeping the family in place for longer periods of time, spouses can now have their own career fields where they can stay in the business organizations for longer periods of time and work their way up through the chain of command and seniority," Preston said.

In addition, Soldiers' children would have greater stability in their education, Preston added.

Unit teams will also benefit from these longer PCS moves.

"Unit readiness is increased with Unit Lifecycle Management, as Soldiers have the stability of working with the same team members and leaders, rather than losing people due to a Cold War-era individual replacement system," Preston said.

While Preston spoke, a new Army Combat Uniform was passed among the Soldiers, so they could get a close look at the uniform Soldiers should be wearing by December 2007.

Preston explained the benefits of the new uniform versus the current battledress and desert combat uniforms, and pointed out its 18 new features, including its wrinkle-free, digitized camouflage fabric.

Sgt. Chris Yoshimoto, a signal support specialist for Company B, 125th Military Intelligence Battalion, was in the audience. Yoshimoto said he thought it was important for to hear about transformation and changes directly from Preston.

"I think that was the best thing he could do -- come out here and address those issues personally to us," Yoshimoto said.

